

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SPOP;; 8,

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION BETWEEN CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ AND PRIME MINISTER
GANDHI ON FAMILY PLANNING

1. DURING A LONG MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER GANDHI ON
DECEMBER 2 (REPORTED SEPTTEL), MRS.. GANDHI ALSO MADE A NUMBER
OF COMMENTS ON THE INDIAN FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM.
CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ ASKED THE PRIME MINISTER FOR HER VIEW
OF THE PROSPECTS FOR THE PRESENT PROGRAM IN RURAL AREAS
WHERE IPT WAS DIFFICULT TO REACH PEOPLE IN FERTILE AGES.

THE PRIME MINISTER ANSWERED THAT SHE BELIEVED THAT PROGRESS
COULD BE MADE BECAUSE THE RURAL WOMEN WERE INTERESTED IN
CONTROLLING FAMILY SIZE DESPITE THE RESISTANCE OF THEIR
HUSBANDS. MRS. GANDHI THOUGHT THAT PROGRESS IN DEVELOPMENT
WOULD HAVE THE MOST EFFECT ON POPULATION LIMITATION.

2. MRS. GANDHI COMPLAINED ABOUT THE POLITICAL ADVANTAGE
WHICH SOME ELEMENTS SEEK TO GAIN FROM THE FAMILY PLANNING
PROGRAM. SHE SAID THERE IS MUCH TALK OF FORCIBLE
STERILIZATIONS BUT IT IS NOT TRUE. SHE CITED THE
STORY OF A DELHI RUMOR THAT A TAXI DRIVER HAD BEEN
STERILIZED AGAINST
HIS WILL AND THE PANIC WHICH IT HAD
CAUSED. SEVERAL MONTHS LATER THE SAME RUMOR WITH THE SAME
EFFECT WAS PROPAGATED IN CALCUTTA. SHE ALSO COMPLAINED
THAT QUITE RECENTLY THOUSANDS OF PARENTS HAD DRAGGED
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THEIR CHILDREN AWAY FROM
DELHI SCHOOLS BECAUSE OF RUMORS
THAT INNOCULATIONS AGAINST TB AND LEPROSY WERE ACTUALLY
FOR THE PURPOSE OF STERILIZATION.

3. CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ ASKED MRS. GANDHI IF SHE SUPPORTED
THE SYSTEM UNDER WHICH GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ARE GIVEN
QUOTAS TO BRING IN NUMBERS OF COUPLES FOR STERILIZATION.
SHE REPLIED THAT SHE WAS AGAINST THIS SYSTEM
WHICH WAS
NOT NECESSARY. THE JOB COULD BE DONE BY PERSUASION
PROVIDING THE CANDIDATES COULD BE ASSURED THEIR EXISTING
CHILDREN WOULD SURVIVE. HEALTH SERVICES WOULD BE NECESSARY
FOR THIS. MRS. GANDHI
REPORTED THAT MAHARASHTRA HAD
PASSED A COMPULSORY STERILIZATION LAW WHICH THE PRESIDENT
HAD NOT YET APPROVED. SHE SAID, "WE WANT THEM TO MODIFY
IT AND MAKE IT LESS HARSH." SHE DID NOT EXPLAIN HER
MEANING.

4. ASKED IF INDIA HAD CONSIDERED A SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM
SHE REPLIED THAT THE COUNTRY WAS TOO LARGE FOR THIS AND
FURTHERMORE SUCH A SYSTEM WOULD DEHUMANIZE FAMILIES. SHE
COMMENTED THAT IT WAS BETTER FOR FAMILIES TO REMAIN
TOGETHER AND ASSUME THE BURDEN OF TAKING CARE OF THEIR
OLD ONES. IN ANY EVENT, INDIA LACKED THE RESOURCES FOR
SUCH A PROGRAM. MRS. GANDHI REPORTED THAT THE REASON
THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF STERILIZATIONS
IS THE PROPAGANDA
EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF THE PROGRAM AND THE
GENERAL INCREASE IN INDIA'S STANDARD OF LIVING. SHE SAID
SHE DID NOT BELIEVE IN REQUIRING THAT CERTAIN NUMBERS OF
STERILIZATIONS BE CARRIED OUT ALTHOUGH SOME STATES HAD
BEEN OVER-ZEALOUS IN THEIR PROGRAMS. CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ
NOTED THAT HE HAD SEEN A QUOTA SYSTEM IN OPERATION IN VARANASI.
THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT RECENTLY INSTRUCTIONS HAD BEEN
GIVEN TO THE UP GOVERNMENT TO MODIFY ITS APPROACH.
SCHNEIDER

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